

Testimony, Commissioner Dora B. Schriro
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection

Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
February 10, 2015

Good morning, Senator Duff, Representative Janowski and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. It is a genuine pleasure to appear before you today having been re-nominated by Governor Malloy to be the Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP). I am honored to be considered, humbled by the confidence that the Governor and others have placed in me, and very excited by the opportunities that lie ahead to contribute to public safety and public service in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to touch upon the work I've undertaken during my first year as Commissioner in Connecticut and the next round of initiatives I am pursuing at DESPP as well as prior appointments, related professional activities, and my academic record.

I was in high school when I chose public safety and public service as my path, and, I've been fortunate. Over time, I have led three state systems including Connecticut, two city agencies, and one federal office.

Just prior to joining the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection as Commissioner in January 2014, I served in the Bloomberg administration as the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction (DOC), an agency with 10,000 employees, 80,000 admissions annually, and an operating budget of \$1.1 billion. During my tenure in NYC, I developed and put into place innovative programs for adolescents, the mentally ill, and inmates readying for release; advanced intake, classification and discharge planning; undertook reform of punitive segregation; and increased staff accountability. During my tenure the DOC was the first in the nation to put into place social impact bond funding; we used it to advance reforms for young adults in custody. We led the identification and implementation of citywide court-based diversion opportunities for mentally ill inmates, and undertook comprehensive reform of punitive segregation.

Before returning to NYC, I was Special Advisor to DHS Secretary Napolitano and the founding Director of the Office of Detention Policy and Planning within Immigration and Customs Enforcement. During my tenure at DHS, I authored, *A Report on the Preliminary Assessment of ICE Detention Policies and Practices: A Recommended Course of Action for Systems Reforms*. DHS adopted the Report as its template for improving the United States immigration detention system.

I have also led both the Missouri and Arizona Departments of Corrections from 1993 through 2001 and from 2003 through 2009, respectively. During these tenures, the Departments were recognized five times by the Innovations in American Government program, and three times by the Council of

State Governments Innovations program, including Winner of the Innovations in American Government award in 2008, an initiative that lowered recidivism by 28 percent and bed-day utilization by \$5.6 million, and raised \$1.4 million for crime victims. In each of these three states (MO, AZ and CT); I am also the first and only woman to have led these agencies. I was also Warden and later, Commissioner of the St. Louis City Division of Corrections.

As detailed on my resume, I have been recognized by my peers as the country's top corrections administrator, by the National Governors Association for distinguished service, for innovations and systems reforms in Arizona and Missouri, and for exceptional service to crime victims by the U.S. Department of Justice. Today, I am proud serve as a commissioner on the boards of the Women's Refugee Commission and the ABA Commission on Immigration and as a member of the ABA Immigrations Standards Subcommittee. And whenever I can, I delight in tending my garden, cooking for a crowd, and restoring my 1965 wooden speed boat.

I am not a stranger to New England. I am a graduate of Northeastern University (BA cum laude) and the University of Massachusetts-Boston (MS) and entered the work force here. I returned to NYC to attend Columbia University where I earned a doctorate in 1984. Later, living in Missouri, I attended law school and received a juris doctorate from St. Louis University in 2002.

Imbedded in my work, are these themes: a willingness to reach out to others, to listen and to learn; a lifelong commitment to excellence and innovation through public service and public safety; a solid grounding in the paramilitary culture and unconditional regard for the contributions made by both uniformed and civilian personnel; and genuine respect for every colleague and coworker including of course, crime victims and survivors, community partners and stakeholders, and organized labor.

My first year as Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection has been both challenging and rewarding. My overall focus was to assess and strengthen our impact on public safety, public service and victim advocacy, and our overall response to and recovery after untoward events, and the past twelve months afforded ample opportunity to do just that – threats of domestic terrorism, Ebola, hurricanes, earthquakes and major snowstorms! Among our key accomplishments, DESPP's six recently consolidated agencies are fully integrated; all of the Troops are open 24x7; a study of overtime spending was completed and a system of oversight put into place; police powers were conferred to the Mohegan and Mashantucket-Pequot Tribes; a number of new initiatives were launched among them all troopers were trained to dispense Naloxone and to administer the Lethality Risk Assessment instrument; School Safety was advanced with the roll out the school security infrastructure grant program and the piloting of a next-generation School Safety Officer program, and by enhancing the safety and wellbeing of first responders and the communities they serve by developing Ebola Protocols for First Responders, an Earthquake Preparedness Checklist for At-risk Communities, and enhanced Emergency Communication strategies for populations whose primary language is other than English.

And, we've just begun. Through 2015 and continuing into 2016, we are fortifying our responses to domestic violence and substance abuse, improving our interactions with persons with mental illness, and focusing on human trafficking and underage prostitution and cybercrime and cyberterrorism.

Thank you kindly for your interest. I am ready to answer any questions you may have.